

# "In a Class by Herself" -- By Fannie Hurst

*A Story of Efficiency and What It Finally Amounted To, Told by the Highest Paid Writer of Short Stories in the World.*

**W**HEN Genevieve Johnson was eighteen she was earning in her capacity as private secretary to the vice president of Lang's Department Store at least thirty-three and one-third per cent more than any youth of her acquaintance.

Genevieve had what in a man would be called "natural-born business ability." She liked the conflict, the clash of wills, the play of cupidity, astuteness, and shrewdness, that took place in the busy mercantile world she day by day beheld milling about her.

When she went home evenings to the small immaculate bungalow she shared with her widowed mother, her talk was of the office; of the tactics of the business executives and her own reactions to their methods. She was alertly, deeply interested in her business career. That, of course, was the major reason why she was destined for outstanding success in a mercantile world that was chiefly people by men. That is why, by the time she was 23, the name "Genevieve Johnson, General Manager," was painted in black letters upon the ground-glass door that led to her suite of private offices.

**B**Y this time Genevieve was earning at least four or five times as much as any man of her acquaintance. She was in a class by herself—a phrase which was destined eventually to grind itself relentlessly into the conscience of the young executive.

She was in a class by herself. More and more, in her social life, awareness of this fact drove itself home to Genevieve. The boys with whom she had grown up, gone to school, and mingled socially, began to segregate themselves, as it were, into little groups of aloofness from Genevieve. They admired her, but she represented something inaccessible. What youth earning less than one-half the amount that this quiet, brown-haired, brown-eyed girl was commanding could feel himself comfortable attempting to entertain her? There was nothing he could do that she could not more readily accomplish for herself. It was an insidious and a subtle and a gradual thing that began to take place in a little world that revolved around Genevieve Johnson.

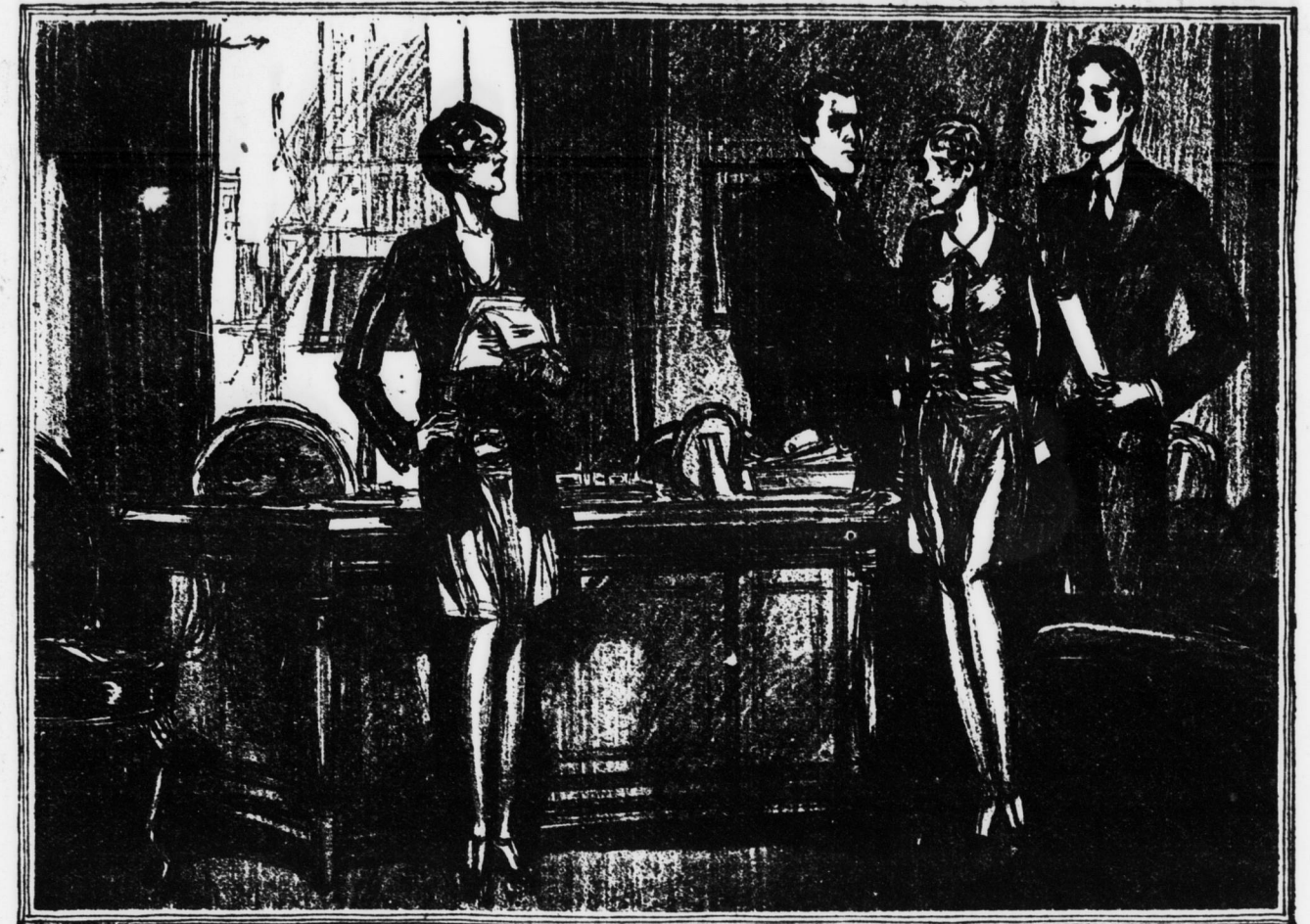
Even with her girl friends, the isolation of her kind of superiority began to rest heavily upon Genevieve. It was not, of course, that they reacted the way the boys did. They regarded her with respect and a certain amount of awe. They were proud of her friendship, and even while they remained in the lesser capacities of stenographers and saleswomen, paid her the tribute of undisguised admiration. But in the end, what happened to these girl friends was that they married off, one by one. The inevitable pairings of young people who had grown up together in a community began to take place. Tom married Jenny. Avril married George. The Kennedy twins married two local merchants. And Rita Irving, Genevieve's closest friend, made an interesting alliance with a young artist from Savannah, Ga.

**O**NE by one, slowly, surely, subtly, inevitably. And with the passing of the years there came to Genevieve the passing of certain illusions, hopes and dreams. The crash of the last of them came when Royal Morgan married a visiting girl from Chattanooga. It was not that Genevieve had admitted even to herself that much of her hope for happiness was bound up in the figure of this able and amiable young engineer. But deeply inside of her, when the blow of his marriage came, Genevieve realized that this time she had been cut to the soul.

It was a strange marriage. Certainly it would have seemed from the very outset, to those who knew Royal, that a girl like Genevieve would have been irrefutably better suited to him than the one of his choice.

Royal was the level-headed, up-and-coming type of American young man, inevitably headed for a substantial kind of success. The girl he married was the frilly, scattered Southern Belle type, that has been crowded to the wall by her more modern and efficient sister.

Genevieve represented pretty nearly all the things that Royal Morgan somehow would seem to have needed in a wife. And yet, as Genevieve admitted bitterly to herself, the greater her success in business the more surely she and Royal grew apart. He had always shown a fine and robust enthusiasm for her achievement, but there came the time when Royal laughingly pointed out to her the fact



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that she was earning more money than he was.

That was the beginning. Royal began to fall off in his attentions. Royal began to be apologetic in offering her the brand of entertainment he was in a position to buy. His modest gifts, such as books and flowers, ceased entirely. The self-consciousness of the difference in their financial position had set in.

Genevieve was once more paying the price of her efficiency.

And, ironically enough, two weeks before Royal's marriage, Genevieve received not only an advance in salary and a generous bonus from her firm, but was promoted to a still more important executive position in the establishment known as Lang's Department Store.

Success magazines began to print full-page stories of the phenomenal rise of this young woman.

Local papers interviewed her and the Associated Press carried a reprint story of her in papers the country over.

The mother of Genevieve, who had been a widow for 22 years, and whose struggle had been a hard one, began to expand in her old age like one of those Japanese paper flowers which, dropped into water, unfold their leaves. Pride in her girl was the sustaining motive of these finishing years of her life. And yet deep in her tired, old heart, the mother of Genevieve saw, just as clearly as Genevieve herself, the kind of defeat that success was bringing to her daughter.

**W**HEN Genevieve was 26, she and her mother occupied a handsome apartment in a smart apartment hotel. Genevieve's clothes were either tailor-made or French imports. She drove her own roadster. She employed a practical-nurse as a companion to her mother. She was regarded as the trim, efficient and outstanding business woman of her State.

There was even some talk of paying her the complimentary gesture of putting her up for mayor, which Genevieve declined.

She made a country-wide tour in behalf of her firm, observing the department store methods of the large stores of the large cities, and on her return wrote a brochure that was published by the thousands and distributed to the personnel of department stores the country over.

The year that Genevieve's mother died, she was earning \$20,000 a year in her capacity as executive.

The blow of this death was something that smote her with an intensity that, even in her mother's declining years, she had never foreseen. It left her so incredibly alone. There had not been so much time, before, to realize the extent of her social isolation. Her days had been crowded with activities; her evenings so devoted to attendance upon this mother.

Suddenly now, devastatingly, Genevieve Johnson was face to face with her loneliness.

And in this case, the slogan "misfortunes never come singly" began to prove itself.

In the year of her mother's death Genevieve, driving her smart roadster through the town's traffic, met with a serious accident. A truck, running wild, crashed into the flank of her car, hurling her some 10 feet out of it.

For four months she lay in a cast. Four months racked with pain; and yet, in a way, as she came to look upon them, the four happiest months of her life.

Royal Morgan, whose wife, before his divorce, had gone off with a chauffeur, came to visit her daily. Something, and something plus, of their old relationship, had revived itself. Also, there was a new wisdom, a new authority, a new reserve to Royal. Life in the physically

tormented months in that hospital was suddenly sweeter to Genevieve than she dared to admit.

**B**UT it was to cause puzzlement to her doctors, the failure of the healthy young body of this young woman to respond as they expected it to.

The bones of Genevieve's body were knitting all right, but inertia lay upon her. She could not be coaxed into even attempting to walk. Her doctors regarded her in amazement and suggested more mental effort.

Royal Morgan came to share in their puzzlement. His entire life was bound up in the recovery of Genevieve Johnson. It frightened him to contemplate the continuation of her bed-ridden days on and on into no one knew what uncertainty.

One day, in spite of his resolution to conceal from her his terror and anxiety, he found himself sitting beside her bed begging her, with tears in his eyes and tears in his voice, to concentrate upon defeating this strange inertia in her.

He poured forth his passionate need for her recovery and companionship. He poured forth his love for her.

It was then that Genevieve, with her happiness over her like an aurora, confessed her plight. Genevieve was afraid to get well, sweeping back over her, might sweep him away from her.

It was the most heartbreaking, heartthumping thing that had ever happened to Royal Morgan. It made her so inexpressibly dear to him and so inexpressibly pathetic.

When Genevieve's convalescence began, so suddenly it happened, so quickly, so completely, that even her doctors were aghast at the miracle of the overnight change that had taken place in her.

Even her recovery was efficient, said her friends.

Royal Morgan knew better.

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## Strictly Private Picnic

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know they have, or they certainly wouldn't have allowed us to stay out here this long."

She looked really anxious and just a trifle unhappy.

"As soon as we've finished eating we must start back."

"Oh, Gen, you wouldn't would you, when this is all so perfect, and we've been waiting for it all our lives?"

"But dear, it isn't right to stay here and be happy, when they're dead somewhere. And anyhow, I couldn't do it. I'm too worried."

"If you knew they were alive somewhere playing golf, would you stay and be happy?"

"Yes, but I know they aren't."

"I'm afraid they are," he insisted, "because you see, the directions I gave them would take them over about 20 miles of bad country roads and bring them back in a circle to the Country Club. They had everything they need to play golf."

The girl stared at him. "Why, Chester, how could you? They'll be furious."

"I've been furious plenty of times and lived through it."

And Chester carried her out to the couch on the sleeping porch to take a nap while he washed the dishes. He was careful to explain, however, that it wouldn't be that way after they were married.

While he was gone, Genevieve thought of a million things that might happen to spoil their perfect day. Suppose Bill and Nora came home. Suppose the Crosslys sent the police to look for them. When Chester came back she suggested that he put the car under the back porch which served as a garage, and walk down over the hill below the creek.

"The sunset will be wonderful there." They stayed until the moon came up. Then it was just too beautiful to leave.

"Let's wait for the sunrise," suggested Chester. "All the world is waiting for it."

"Chester, all my life I've been wanting to rebel against that 12 o'clock regulation and stay out all night."

"And all my life I've been wanting to rebel against work and stay away for a week."

"But we couldn't do that. We could make

up a story about one night, but all the stories in the world wouldn't cover a week."

"I think one good love story would," said Chester. "There's a hick town about five miles down the road where we can buy a marriage license, and some more groceries."

"Don't you think we'd better send a telegram to the Crosslys, too?"

He frowned and looked thoughtful. A telegram would be postmarked, and Chester wondered whether the slightest hint would bring the kind friends with a lot of good wishes which he felt he and Genevieve could very easily get along without.

"You sit in the car, dear, while I telegraph the folks," he told her, and the message which the Crosslys received read like this:

MARRIED AND HAPPY. HONEYMOONING IN NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND SAN FRANCISCO.

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## Census Questions

Continued from Ninth Page.

detailed tables as to ages. These will be listed by 5's up to the age of 25, and by 10's from 25 up to 75 years of age.

The next two or three years will be spent by the extra clerical force in the bureau by completing the tabulations. Twelve or more large quarto volumes will be issued by the bureau as a result of the census and the subsequent tabulations.

In order to be prepared for the census enumerator's call at your door, it is necessary only to read the list of questions which will be asked and make sure that you can answer all these questions relative to each member of the household—man, woman or child. Everybody in the country counts, and everybody is to be counted.

If the present rate of increase should go on indefinitely, statisticians estimate that in 1970 there would be 200,000,000 persons in Continental United States. However, the present rate is not expected to continue indefinitely. The birth rate is declining. Immigration is being held down and further restrictions may be imposed in future years.